

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 EAE-00 ORM-02 DHA-02 VO-03

SCA-01 INSE-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 /083 W

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O P 131130Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4025

INFO DOD WASHDC PRIORITY

CNO WASHDC PRIORITY

JCS WASHDC PRIORITY

CINCPACFLT PRIORITY

USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY

CINCPACREPPHIL PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANILA 5135

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, MARR, RP, US, VS

SUBJECT: VIETNAMESE REFUGEE HANDLING

1. SUMMARY: WE HAVE THE MAKINGS OF A CONFRONTATION WITH THE GOP OVER RESPONSIBILITY FOR SIXTY-FIVE VIETNAMESE REFUGEES WHO FIRST PUT IN AT PALAWAN IN TWO BOATS APRIL 4, EN ROUTE TO SUBIC NAVAL BASE. FOR THE TIME BEING THEY APPARENTLY ARE CONTENT TO REMAIN AT PALAWAN IN CARE OF THE LOCAL BISHOP WHO HAS ASSURED THE U.S. HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES REPRESENTATIVE DHAR, WHO VISITED PALAWAN APRIL 11, THAT HE IS PREPARED TO PROVIDE ALL NECESSARY ACCOMMODATIONS AND RATIONS FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS. THE GOP FOR ITS PART IN THE PERSON OF ACTION SECRETARY OF

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS COLLANTES AND COMMISSIONER FOR IMMIGRATION

AND NATURALIZATION REYES APPARENTLY PREFERS THAT THE REFUGEES MOVE ON TO THEIR STATED OBJECTIVE OF SUBIC AND THAT THE U.S. ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEM. THE COLLANTES AND REYES POSITION MAY BE LARGELY TACTICAL, BUT WE MUST CONTEMPLATE THE WORST CASE THAT ALL SIXTY-FIVE WILL BE FLOWN TO SUBIC ANY DAY SOON OR MORE LIKELY BE EMBARKED TO CONTINUE THE VOYAGE ON THEIR OWN TO SUBIC. AT LEAST, TODAY COLLANTES TOLD DHAR SOMEWHAT AGITATEDLY THAT SUCH REFUGEES ARE FOR THE U.S. TO HANDLE; REYES TOLD US THEY WOULD BE COMING TO SUBIC; AND DFA ASSISTANT SECRETARY GARCIA ADVISED DHAR THAT INSTRUCTIONS HAVE BEEN SENT TO PALAWAN TO ASCERTAIN REFUGEE PREFERENCES FOR POINT OF ENTRY. END SUMMARY.

2. THE EMBASSY HAS ADVISED REYES DIRECTLY, COLLANTES AND GARCIA THROUGH DHAR, THE PAPAL NUNCIO WHO IS INTERESTED BECAUSE THERE ARE TWO PRIESTS AND TWO NUNS AMONG THE REFUGEES, AND OF COURSE DHAR HIMSELF THAT (A) THE RECEPTION AND INITIAL PROCESSING OF SUCH REFUGEES IS OF COURSE A GOP RESPONSIBILITY IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, (B) THE UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY IN THE SECOND INSTANCE TO ESTABLISH THE STATUS AND FACILITATE ONWARD PLACEMENT; AND (C) THE U.S. AND PRESUMABLY OTHER COUNTRIES WOULD RESPOND TO INQUIRIES ABOUT POSSIBLE REFUGE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR EXISTING LAWS AND REGULATIONS. IN ADDITION, WE HAVE ADVISED ALL CONCERNED THAT THE SUBIC NAVAL BASE HAS NO SUCH RESPONSIBILITY AND, SINCE THE CLOSING OF TEMPORARY AND EMERGENCY FACILITIES SEVERAL MONTHS BACK, HAS NO PROVISIONS FOR ANY SUCH RECEPTION AND PROCESSING. ALSO, THE SUBIC NAVAL BASE HAS BEEN INFORMED OF THE ABOVE AND ADVISED NOT RPT NOT TO ADMIT THE REFUGEES SHOULD THEY APPEAR BY LAND OR BY SEA.

3. EMBASSY RECEIVED QUERY APRIL 13 FROM ARNOLD ZEITLIN, AP, AS TO WHAT WE WOULD DO IF REFUGEES ARRIVED AT SUBIC. ZEITLIN SOURCED COMMENT TO IMMIGRATION COMMISSIONER REYES. EMBASSY TOLD ZEITLIN A) WE WOULD BE SURPRISED IF REFUGEES HEADING FOR U.S. FACILITIES IN SUBIC SINCE WE NO LONGER HAD REFUGEE CENTER THERE; B) RESPONSIBILITY IN FIRST INSTANCE IS GOP AND IN SECOND INSTANCE, UNHCR; C) WE WOULD CONSIDER ANY APPLICATIONS FOR VISAS. WE BELIEVE THIS IS REASONABLE LINE TO CONTINUE TO TAKE

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WITH ANY PRESS QUERIES, AVOIDING TO EXTENT POSSIBLE SUGGESTION OF DIRECT DISAGREEMENT WITH GOP.

4. SUBSEQUENT TO ESTABLISHING PRESS LINE, EMBASSY USED IMMIGRATION COMMISSIONER REYES TO PASS SAME MESSAGE TO GOP. REYES, HOWEVER, SAID REFUGEES WERE IN CARE OF PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD (THEY APPARENTLY HAVE NOT YET LEFT PALAWAN), THEIR INSTRUCTIONS WERE TO PROCEED TO SUBIC AND

HE, REYES, MIGHT LOOK AT PROBLEM AGAIN AFTER EASTER
HOLIDAYS. (COMMENT: IF REFUGEES MOVE IN THEIR OWN CRAFT,
THEY MAY WELL NOT GET TO SUBIC UNTIL AFTER EASTER.)

5. TO ENHANCE COOPERATIVE IMAGE OF EMBASSY IN RESPONDING
TO REFUGEE VISA PROBLEMS (AS OPPOSED TO TAKING OVERALL
RESPONSIBILITY FOR REFUGEES), WE ARE DESPATCHING CONSULAR

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MANILA 5135

OFFICER TO PALAWAN AS SOON AS TRANSPORTATION CAN BE
ARRANGED. HE WILL SCREEN THE 37 PERSONS IDENTIFIED BY
UNHCR REP AS DESERVING IMMIGRATION TO U.S. FYI: FRANCE
HAS BEGUN PROCESSING 13 REFUGEES IDENTIFIED AS PRESPEC-
TIVE FRENCH IMMIGRANTS AND CANADA IS PROCESSING 20
(INCLUDING 5 WITH DUAL INTEREST IN U.S.) END FYI. WE
WILL ATTEMPT TO KEEP UP THIS MOMENTUM.

6. US NAVAL AUTHORITIES AT SUBIC TODAY INFORMED PMLO OF REPORTS THAT REFUGEES MAY COME TO SUBIC BAY. US NAVY STRESSED THAT SUBIC NO LONGER HAS FACILITIES TO HANDLE REFUGEES AND THAT ANY REFUGEES ARRIVING IN THE SUBIC BAY AREA WILL BE CONSIDERED THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOP. THE PMLO WAS ADVISED THAT SHOULD THE REFUGEE VESSELS IN CONFIDENTIAL

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FACT ARRIVE AT SUBIC BAY, THE PMLO SHOULD DIRECT THEM TO ANCHORAGES OUTSIDE BASE WATERS. (PRESUMABLY IN NORTHERN POCKET OF BAY WHERE VIETNAMESE REFUGEE VESSEL WAS ACCEPTED BY GOP LAST FALL.) PMLO APPEARED TO HAVE NO RPT NO PROBLEM WITH THIS, BUT IT IS LIKELY THAT HE HAD NOT YET RECEIVED ANY INSTRUCTIONS ON THE MATTER FROM MANILA.

7. WHILE WE WILL MAINTAIN THIS OVER-ALL POSTURE FOR MAXIMUM EFFECT ON THE GOP IN WHAT MAY BE A LITTLE WAR OF NERVES, THERE ARE SOME REMOTE "WORST CASE" POSSIBILITIES WHICH COULD RESULT IN THE REFUGEES APPEARING ON OUR DOORSTEP ON SHORT NOTICE. FOR EXAMPLE, THE GOP COULD FORCE THE ISSUE BY FLYING THE REFUGEES DIRECTLY TO CUBI POINT, TO CLARK, OR TO MANILA, WHERE THEY MIGHT THEN BE BUSSED TO ONE OR THE OTHER OF THE BASES OR TO THE EMBASSY. IF A SITUATION WERE TO ARISE ALONG THESE LINES, AND WE THINK IT UNLIKELY, WE BELIEVE WE WOULD HAVE TO FACE THE PROSPECT OF TAKING THE REFUGEES IN, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY, TO AVOID THE KIND OF HUMAN CONFRONTATION WHICH WOULD GENERATE MOST UNFORTUNATE PUBLICITY. WE REPEAT THAT WE SEE LITTLE PROSPECT OF THIS HAPPENING. THERE IS A GREATER LIKELIHOOD OF SUCH A CONFRONTATION IF THE REFUGEE VESSELS ARE ESCORTED BY PHILIPPINE NAVY UNITS INTO THE WATERS OF SUBIC NAVAL BASE.

8. COMMENT: VIEW LIKELIHOOD GOP A) CONCERNED THAT CONTINUAL STREAM OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES TO PHILIPPINES WILL HURT ITS IMAGE WITH NORTH VIETNAMESE B) MAY INTEND TO ATTEMPT TO FORCE U.S. TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR HANDLING OF REFUGEES, EMBASSY BELIEVES FIRM STAND REQUIRED AT OUTSET. STATEMENTS OF UNDERSECRETARY COLLANTES AND IMMIGRATION COMMISSIONER REYES AND WHAT WE KNOW OF SUPPORTIVE GOP STEPS SUGGESTS GOP MAY NOT BACK OFF. GOP COULD GO EVEN FURTHER BY POSING WORST CASE SUGGESTED ABOVE BUT WE THINK THAT UNLIKELY. SHOULD THE UNLIKELY NEVERTHELESS OCCUR, RATHER THAN EXPOSE U.S. TO RIDICULE FOR DISREGARD OF INNOCENT REFUGEES CAUGHT IN SQUEEZE PLAY, WE WOULD PROPOSE TO MAKE NECESSARY TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATIONS, WHILE EMPHASIZING TO GOP AND PRESS THAT PROPER RESPONSIBILITY LIES WITH GOP.

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